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ABSTRACT

The extent to which research training is needed by Master of Public Administration (MPA) graduates at the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs, was investigated through the administration of a questionnaire to 38 August 1977 MPA degree recipients. The questionnaire contained 13 questions concerning where the student took most of his courses; what research courses he took; his opinions on research training; his job or position title; and his comments on research training. Conclusions of the study included: research training should be included at the MPA level; the research problems course was the single most valuable course for training and understanding of research techniques; almost two-thirds of the MPA graduates took other research-oriented courses in addition to the research problems course; a master's thesis or two research projects were not desirable programs required for the MPA degree; and the ideal preparation for research training would be a research oriented course(s) in addition to the research problems course. A literature review includes the following topics: public administration, curriculum, research, and value of the MPA degree. A sample questionnaire, initial letter, followup letter, and bibliography are appended. (SW)

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RESEARCH TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA: AN OPINION SURVEY

by

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Political Science 5990: Research Problems

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I. INTRODUCTION

Research Problem

This study attempts to determine to what extent research training at the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs, is needed by the Master of Public Administration (MPA) graduates.

Need for the Study

A great need for this study was found necessary since currently there is no graduate student survey of the one required course in research training at the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs. One pivotal question that arises is how effective is the required Research Problems course (Political Science 5990) in helping the graduate students acquire the needed research skills:

Today, graduate students are expected to understand and perform research activities with competence. Research training generally require term papers, studies, projects, internships, theses, reports, and dissertations.

At the University of Oklahoma, the Advanced Program in Public Administration requires, in addition to a recommended Methods course, a Research Problems course in order to receive the master's degree. Doing

a Research Problems course is similar to doing a master's thesis, except that it is not as comprehensive or formal. Nevertheless, a lot of time, money, and effort is necessary to complete a research paper.

The question is often asked, is all this research necessary to provide a graduate student with the amount of research skills he may need? This study will attempt to answer the question from the viewpoint of the former students who graduated with a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree. By surveying those students who have already graduated and have received credit for the Research Problems course, a more unbiased opinion will result than if students were questioned who still have this required course to take.

It is never too late to conduct badly needed research to identify our greatest accomplishments and most humane insights and to determine what effect sharing in the best and noblest has on the development of humane individuals. Precise terminology, reflecting clear thinking, is essential to research.[1]

In the last two decades, research in general has assumed a position of tremendous importance in this

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[1]Mauritz Johnson, "Needed Research: Emphasis on the Future," Educational Leadership 33 (April 1976): 505

country. This is primarily so because research has such enormous implications for policy decisions. Social scientists in particular have increasingly turned toward the pursuit of research as a means for finding answers and solutions to the many problems which plague the schools and our educational process. Thus, research has been elevated to a very lofty position.[2]

Research integrated into the teaching curricula seems especially strong at the Lyndon Baines Johnson School at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, where students in their second year pursue an independent research project which generally includes an analysis of a public policy issue for a public sector client, agency, or legislative committee.[3]

A study of graduate business schools by Anderson and Usry concluded that a master's thesis or report, though not required much of the time, was considered a useful tool for developing research skills. Learning about a specific topic, preparing for continuing self-study, and improving writing skills, were other benefits

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[2]Arthur C. Littleton, "Research in Education: Methodological and Theoretical Considerations," Journal of Negro Education 45 (Winter 1976):78

[3]Stuart Nagel and Marian Neef, "What is and What Should Be in University and Policy studies?" Public Administration Review 37 (July/August 1977):384

derived from such an exercise. The study stated that:

> However effectively done, masters' theses or reports are an expensive form of instruction which will flourish only to the extent that accounting educators and administrators agree on the desirability of research experience and adopt efficient and effective means of supervision. A compromise may be a course in which completed research of others is studied. Still, we remain convinced that personal research experience is the best teacher, well worth the cost and effort.[4]

Criticism of Research

In recent years research in the psychosocial sciences has come in for considerable criticism.[5] It was found that most published research is of mediocre quality . . . The most frequently cited shortcomings of research articles were in the areas of procedures, data analysis, and summary and conclusions.[6]

Graduate students, especially at the master's level, are typically not exposed to enough instruction in statistics and/or research methodology to cope with the kind of stuff that finds its way into the journals.

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[4]Wilton T. Anderson and Milton F. Usry, "Use of Theses and Reports in Master's Degree Programs," The Accounting Review 45 (July 1970):579-84.

[5]G. H. Bantock, "Educational Research: A Criticism," Harvard Educational Review 31 (Summer 1961):264.

[6]Annie W. Ward, Bruce W. Hall, and Charles F. Schramm, "Evaluation of Published Educational Research: A National Survey," American Educational Research Journal 12 (Spring 1975):109.

The expectation that one course in statistics and another in research methods can be supplemented by the busywork activity of abstracting articles to make one a competent research consumer is totally unrealistic. Consider also that in most instances at the undergraduate level, there may be even less formal exposure. This means that the person with only a bachelor's degree is not likely to seek periodical literature as a source of information or inspiration.[7]

Definition of Terms

Graduate Student. This term refers to the graduate students who are studying for the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree at the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs.

Research Training. This term refers to the type of training from (1) taking theory and research seminar courses; (2) planning and conducting a research study, such as PS 5990; and (3) serving as a research assistant to an educational, industrial, or governmental institution.

Organization of Chapters

The organization of this study is divided into

[7]Charles A. Asbury, "Why Educational Research is of Limited Use to the Community," Journal of Negro Education 45 (Winter 1976):22.

five chapters.

Chapter I starts with an introduction to the research study. It includes the research problem, need for the study, criticism of research, definition of terms, and organization of chapters.

Chapter II presents the review of related literature. It includes a review of public administration education according to its definition, needs, curriculum, research, guidelines, values, and analysis.

Chapter III reports the general procedures in collecting the research data. It describes the study questionnaire, identifies sample selected, discusses the research procedures for administering the questionnaire, and enumerates the number of responses and nonresponses.

Chapter IV provides the findings of the study. It includes the practical application of the findings and the description of the study sample. Presentation of the findings appears in both narrative and tabular forms.

Chapter V gives the conclusions and recommendations.

The study ends with an appendix and bibliography.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Public Administration

Public administration is now committed to becoming a professionally oriented field of learning. The reshaping of the educational approach is occurring both within and outside of the university. The changes are based on these major premises:

1. That public administration must be a field of learning which directly relates the theories of government and social needs to the quality and delivery of public services and to the administrative environment of the practitioner.
2. That the education and training of public managers together with the development of a distinctive public management profession should be the focus of university as well as governmentally sponsored graduate programs in public administration.
3. That there must be interaction between educators and practitioners in teaching and performance both within the university and governmental settings to effectively mould a public management profession committed to

improving the quality of public services.

4. That educational institutions, governmental agencies and professional associations must continuously collaborate in the development of managerial talent, including manpower planning, training placement, and other facets of the personnel development process.[1]

Education for public administration in the United States is highly decentralized because the national Constitution assigns the responsibility for all forms of education to the fifty individual states. Therefore, unlike many other countries, a national agency to plan and coordinate the education and training of public servants does not exist. Limited only by their inclination and resources, colleges and universities have been generally free to establish various types of educational programs in public administration as they desired. Consequently, public administration education took root earlier in some states and areas than in others. It was fostered in some cases by privately-financed universities and in other instances by publicly

[1]Ernest A. Engelbert, Recent Developments in Public Administration Education in the Unites States (Mons, Belgium: Western European Universities for Administrative Public Service, 1975), pp. 26-27.

supported institutions. Differing programs origins led to various organizational structures and curriculum and resulted in different program objectives and curricular content.[2]

The advancement of public administration as an educational field in the United States also has been shaped by its diversity of subject matter. Growing out of the subjects of public law, political science, scientific management and engineering, the field of public administration has been subsequently molded by knowledge from sociology, psychology, anthropology, comparative and international studies, and other branches of learning. Given this range of intellectual input and achieving consensus among educators concerning what should be the central knowledge of this field has been difficult. The diversity of subject matter also led to continuous academic controversies as to whether public administration is an art or a science, a discipline or a profession, a basic or an applied research field, an independent or an interdisciplinary field of knowledge.[3]

Despite this proliferation of educational and

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[2]Ibid., p. 2.
[3]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

training programs, public administration has not yet achieved the educational status and recognition of well-established disciplines such as economics or psychology or comparability with the professions such as engineering or law. This is primarily due to the fact that public administration has had difficulty in establishing its intellectual identity. Overshadowed by fields of knowledge from which it had emerged and buffeted by the controversies over whether it should be developed as a research discipline or an applied profession, public administration found progress difficult in the educational setting. Moreover, because of the existing separation between the educational institutions and employing jurisdictions, a healthy nexus between theory and practice was never made so that a distinctive profession did not readily come into being.[4]

The Graduate programs in public administration are designed for persons preparing for careers in the governmental service, research, consulting, and teaching . . . The study of public administration is not considered as training for specific tasks and positions.[5]

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[4]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[5]Chapman and Cleaveland, "Program Structure: Purpose, Organization, Resources, and Content." Meeting the Needs of Tomorrow's Public Service: Guidelines for Professional Education in Public Administration, p.24.

Definition

The first step toward professionalization of public administration is to define more accurately the role and the requirements of the public manager. Today the determination of who is a public administrator is largely a phenomenon of self-identification, most often made by those trained in public administration or in one of the staff specialties of personnel, budgeting, finance, organization management, or business administration. The number of doctors, scientists, attorneys, and others in specialist occupations who identify themselves as public managers, rather than as a specialist, are few in comparison to their numbers in the public service. In public administration, we firmly believe that being a public manager is intrinsically different from being a manager in some other context such as industry or commerce. The important differences center upon a somewhat intangible motivation which seems to pervade the best of our public administrators--a deep and abiding motivation to do that which best serves the public.[6]

[6]Richard L. Chapman, "The Public's Stake in Professional Standards for the Public Manager," The Bureaucrat 6 (Summer 1977):50

Leonard D. White described public administration as "the management of men and materials in the accomplishment of the purposes of the state. This definition emphasizes the managerial phase of administration and minimizes its legalistic and formal aspect . . . It leaves open the question to what extent the administration itself participates in formulating the purposes of the state, and avoids any controversy as to the precise nature of administrative action . . . The objective of public administration is the most efficient utilization of the resources at the disposal of officials and employees."

Public administration was pragmatic, problem-oriented, sustained by faith in progress, efficiency, democratic government, and what we now call meritocracy. The early public administration, like some other societal developments, grew out of concern about public corruption and scandal. It was a reform movement, directed against clear and present evils that rational and the well-intentioned people could correct. Like other movements associated with the Progressive era, it reflected a fundamental optimism that mankind could direct and control its environment and destiny for the better. During the three-quarters of a century since its birth as a

field of study, public administration has experienced, been challenged by, and to some extent responded to, many of the same kinds of environmental and internal forces as have other fields of thought, study, and practice.[7]

Essays indicate the absence of an agreed theoretic base for public administration, of a core and of firm boundaries for the field, and even of a definition of what it is. Public administration is undergoing, according to some, an identity crisis or, according to others, an intellectual crisis.[8]

Frederick C. Mosher, one of the most notable of the field's scholars and practitioners, stated that public administration "has cross-interests with virtually all the other social sciences. . . In fact, it would appear that any definition of this field would be either so encompassing as to call forth the wrath or ridicule of others or so limiting as to stultify its own disciplines. Perhaps it is best that it not be defined. It is more an area of interest than a discipline, more a focus than a separate science."

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[7]Frederick C. Mosher, ed., American Public Administration: Past, Present, Future (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1975), p. 4.

[8]Ibid., pp. 4-5.

It is fashionable to describe the field of public affairs/public administration as eclectic, interdisciplinary, applied, and career-oriented. These terms, while reasonably accurate descriptors of the prevailing self-image of the profession, are shown in a recent national survey to represent more the ideal than the real.[9]

The reshaping of public administration education and practice in the United States during the 1970's is reflected in three major trends, namely, (1) the redefinition and reorganization of public administration education within the college and university setting, (2) the development of public management as a distinctive profession comparable to other professions, and (3) the emergence of new working relationships among the educational institutions, the professional associations and governmental agencies. These trends are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Their full impact upon the American educational and governmental institutions may not be evident for another decade or two, but ultimately they should go far toward improving the quality of public

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[9]A.J. Mackelprang and A. Lee Fritschler, "Graduate Education in Public Affairs/Public Administration," Public Administration Review 35 (March/April 1975):182.

service in the United States.[10]

Tomorrow's Needs

Today there has been a proliferation of literature on public administration education. The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) has published a report in January 1973 on the present status of public administration education and projections for the future.

The report concludes that "current programs of education for public administration are not meeting the present professional needs and, without considerable rejuvenation, most certainly will fail to meet the needs of tomorrow's public service."[10] It is evident that administrative institutions, organizational arrangements, personnel systems, administrative policies, and operational practices will have to undergo serious adjustments to meet the new conditions and to carry the increasing load. More than ever, students see public administration as an area where they have the opportunity to make a difference. This is a challenge to public administration and to the graduate schools of public administration. Many of the necessary pieces are there to be put together to create a more effective public

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[10]Chapman and Cleaveland, Tomorrow's Needs, p. 53.

service.[11]

The NAPA study can easily be misread as research findings, when in fact it reports little more than unevaluated impressions. Questions about the current status of PA programs, their purpose, financial status, and the range of curricula employed, for example, have been answered but without being either systematically asked or researched. The need for more research on public affairs education is clear in the light of the ferment that characterizes the field: controversy surrounding the new PA, the growth of policy science approaches, rich experimentation in OD, challenging of comparative and developmental data, conflicting analysis of complex systems, and the continuing search for public administration theories. . . Clear research questions were never formulated, the answers offered have unknown validity, the procedures used undercut any confidence, and the analysis is mainly an assembly of impressions.[12]

The report's praise of two-year MPA programs implies that an individual who seeks to enter the public

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[11]Ibid. p. 59.

[12]Lawrence C. Howard, "Education for the Public's Interest, A Critique and a Projection of the NAPA View of Meeting the Needs of Tomorrow's Public Service," Public Administration Review 35 (March/April 1975): 175-76.

service should have six years of college training before so doing (not to mention practicums or internships); yet the report also concludes that the job market is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Query: who is going to invest six years in a nonexistent job market? Will not implementation of the report's suggestion require a change in present government hiring policies which treat holders of the MPA and holders of any other master's degree exactly the same?[13]

The report can be read as confirming views already held in Washington that the universities aren't relevant, and thus do not deserve additional resources. A second possible negative consequence of this report could be further damaging criticism of the poor quality of research conducted in the public administration field. . . Hopefully, the major result will be positive: a heightened interest on the part of government and private foundations to complete a more intensive and systematic analysis of graduate public affairs education as a prelude to providing more resources for public service tomorrow.[14]

A few questions have emerged: (1) what are

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[13]Ibid. p. 177.
[14]Ibid. p. 178.

the learning theories in a public administration program? (2) what are the public problem areas to which priority should be given? and (3) what knowledge and research skills should best meet these problems?

We believe that a rearrangement of educational priorities is called for with an investment in education and research in these public affairs/administration fields of several hundred million dollars annually.[15]

Curriculum

Curricula, as a reflection of this development, combine in some balanced way such considerations as the underlying environment of social change, the substantive and politico-administrative aspects of particular policy issues, techniques of policy and systems analysis, and the nature of large-scale management and bureaucracy. . . The successful curriculum depends upon careful delineation between, on one hand, what the student needs to learn, regardless of the particular area or phase of government activity he plans to enter, and, on the other, what he wants to learn on an elective basis in the light

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[15]Donald C. Stone, "Views on Education for Public Affairs/Administration," Public Administration Review 30 (March/April 1970):160-61.

of his career interests.[16]

Unless educators are willing to tell the emerging generation that they have little idea about what matters anymore, colleges and universities must seek to redefine the threads of common experience that bind us together. To do this, campuses would have to recreate some common core curriculum. This, it should be emphasized does not mean that we need a national curriculum, and such a suggestion from the United States Commissioner of education certainly is not intended to indicate that the federal government should legislate the contents of education. Colleges and universities themselves must make these decisions.[17]

But a curriculum that suggests students have nothing in common is just as flawed as one that suggests students are all alike. We need a core curriculum not to protect the disciplines, not to worship a set of books, but because as individuals we also hold important things in common. What we need is to find a middle ground.[18]

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[16]Edward S. Flash, Jr., "Evolution in Public Administration Education," Public Administration Review 31 (November/December 1971):666-667.

[17]Ernest L. Boyer, "The Chaos of College Curricula," Washington Post, 30 October 1977, p. C1.

[18]Ibid.

The core curriculum should convey key sectors of American life: government and law, business, finance, the economy and the private non-profit realm. Case studies would be particularly useful adjuncts.[19]

No single philosophy has dominated the educational system for public administration in the United States. Although various theories of scientific management, of political and institutional relationships, of behavioral dynamics and cultural influence, for example, have all had strong impact on curricular content during one historical period or another, and although each of the theoretical approaches has had long-time disciples, none reigned supreme. The educational system was too decentralized and amorphous and encompassed too many independent centers for decision-making for all public administration programs to readily accept a common ideological and pedagogical framework.[20]

Since there is no consensus among educators concerning what should constitute the core subjects, public administration programs vary greatly in the subject matter which is emphasized. Usually subjects are

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[19]Ibid, p. C5

[20]Englebert, Public Administration Education, p. 6.

stressed which appear most relevant and appropriate to the program's basic educational objectives. Program objectives may be categorized as follows:

1. Programs designed to prepare students for careers in the executive branches or government (the permanent civil service) vis-a-vis programs designed to train more broadly in public affairs and for all public positions, elective and appointive.
2. Programs designed to prepare students for entry-level positions in government vis-a-vis programs emphasizing education for long-term career development.
3. Programs designed to prepare students in the broader aspects of management as administrative generalists, vis-a-vis programs which train specialists for specific functions of government.
4. Programs which emphasize the development of the analytical capacities of students vis-a-vis programs that focus on the development of the student's applied and operational skills.[21]

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[21]Ibid., p. 7-8.

The foregoing educational objectives are not, of course, mutually exclusive nor do American programs in public administration neatly fall into one category or the other. More often than not the director of a broadly based program would contend that it was meeting most of the foregoing objectives. Nevertheless, the diversities have been sufficiently great so that the reputations of many public administration programs have been built upon the degree to which they were successfully providing students with particular kinds of knowledge and skills for specific categories of public positions. As examples, some programs specialize in the training for urban administration, others in line-staff management, others in public affairs and still others in policy analysis.[22]

There are two schools of thought about required courses for programs in public administration. One is that there is a considerable body of knowledge and skills that every administrator should have irrespective of level of government, function, or substantive program interest. . . A second philosophy is that there are very broad areas in which students should prepare them-

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[22]Ibid., p. 8.

selves, but that the designation of specific courses as required detracts from the opportunity for student self-development. Here the emphasis is upon individually tailored programs based on mutual diagnosis by the student in cooperation with an experienced faculty counselor. This philosophy results in only a handful of required core courses and, in some instances, in no specific required courses but the requirement for the selection of courses from core areas.[23]

It is particularly noteworthy that 66 public affairs/public administration programs list methodology as a core course requirement, yet only 21 programs reportedly offer analytic methods as part of their regular public affairs/public administration curriculum.[24]

Research

Like most other programs preparing individuals for a professional career, fewer and fewer public administration programs require a thesis. However, there is still a recognized need for some vehicle through which the student can demonstrate his ability to research

[23]Chapman and Cleaveland, Tomorrow's Needs, p. 33.

[24]Mackelprang and Fritschler, "Graduate Education," p. 189.

a signigicant problem and present his findings clearly and coherently in written form. Where a thesis is no longer required, students must develop a research or policy analysis paper of extended length, which may be linked directly to an internship or practicum, or reflect team projects on actual public policy problems. Both students and faculty tend to view such a research or policy paper requirement as more relevant to the role of the professional practitioner than the traditional graduate thesis.[25]

Comprehensive examinations, like the thesis requirement, are less likely to be found today than ten years ago. However, two-thirds of those institutions responding to the NASPAA survey still require some type of comprehensive examination--some of which are written or oral, and others which are oral only and centered upon a research or policy paper.[26]

A practicum can be defined as student work on a research problem, frequently one of current interest to a public organization, undertaken under the supervision of a faculty member. The research may take place within

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[25]Chapman and Cleaveland, Tomorrow's Needs, p. 32.

[26]Ibid.

the agency where the agency acts as sponsor, or the researcher may be given limited access to agency personnel and files.[27]

Five graduate schools "required the completion of a research paper (or thesis) based upon a field experience or based upon some area of independent study. A larger number (20) made them optional either as a substitute for a stated number of courses or in place of an internship assignment. Seventeen schools . . . did not provide for a thesis under any condition or option. . . For the most part, graduate public administration programs apparently have been fashioned out of a loosely structured imitative technique whereby a particular university scans the experiences of selected universities and packages a hybridized variety of its own. This has led to critical dispersal in program characteristics among sponsoring universities and a serious challenge to the profession to better standardize the expectations and requirements of the professional study of public administration.[28]

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[27]Ibid., p. 35.

[28]James A. Medeiros, "The Professional Study of Public Administration," Public Administration Review 34 (May/June 1974):259.

Public administration has a rich heritage of effectively linking education, research, and reform-oriented action to the solution of important public problems.[29]

Guidelines

In 1973 the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), recognizing that the quality of government and public service was being undermined by diffuseness of public administration training programs, felt that the time had come to spell out the necessary qualifications of public managers. After a year-long study, conducted in cooperation with the American Society for Public Administration, the International City Management Association, and other organizations concerned with improving the profession public management, NASPAA adopted Guidelines and Standards for Professional Masters Degree Programs in Public Affairs/Administration, built around a matrix of professional competencies of public managers.[30]

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[29]Chapman and Cleaveland, "Education for Public Administration: Its Promises, Challenges, and Opportunities," Tomorrow's Needs, p. 1.

[30]Ernest A. Engelbert, "Professional Standards for Public Managers, Boon or Bane?" The Bureaucrat 6 (Summer 1977):9.

The matrix defines the competencies of public managers in terms of four basic components, namely (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) values, and (4) behavior. A qualified public manager should be able to apply each of these components to five subject-matter areas, namely (1) the political, social and economic content of administration, (2) quantitative and nonquantitative analytical tools, (3) individual, group, and organizational dynamics, (4) policy analysis, and (5) administrative and management processes. The matrix goes on to specify the content and application of each component to each subject-matter area.[31]

The Guidelines and Standards are not prescriptive; they set forth goals to be attained rather than requirements to be imposed. They provide criteria for evaluating educational and training programs in public affairs/public administration as well as for measuring the competencies of public managers: They are sufficiently broad and flexible to be applied to all professional masters degree programs irrespective of size and specialization and to all public managers irrespective of the level of government or the functional area of

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[31] Ibid.

specialization. The Guidelines and Standards also help to demarcate the professional boundaries of the field of public affairs/public administration so that education and training can be more sharply focused and pertinent.[32]

NASPAA has prepared a 1975 self-study guide for evaluating MPA degree programs. "The self-study should examine and evaluate the public affairs/public administration enterprise over time, review the public affairs/public administration unit's present activities, and look to future goals and programs. The main focus of the self-study should be on performance in relation to goals and objectives."[33]

Under the research area, we should ask:

1. What are the research objectives of the unit? How do these objectives mesh with the overall program goals of the public affairs/public administration unit?
2. Does the unit have an organized research

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[32]"Introduction," Guidelines and Standards for Professional Masters Degree Programs in Public Affairs/Public Administration (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, 1974), p. 1.

[33]"Introduction," Guide for the Self-Evaluation of Professional Masters Degree Programs in Public Affairs/Public Administration (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, 1975), p. 2.

program? How does this research program help the unit meet its objectives?

3. What percentage of the support of the graduate students and faculty come from sponsored research or contract programs? Is the unit satisfied that the research activities of the unit in no way endanger control of other activities or unnecessarily impede other program objectives?[34]

The educational objectives and approaches adopted by universities depended upon a variety of factors including the geographical and institutional setting, the resources available, the theoretical orientations of the faculty, the quality and composition of the student body, and the opportunities of employment for the graduates. Institutions located in large metropolitan areas frequently fostered urban oriented programs. Institutions of national prominence with substantial private endowments could afford to develop programs that were more theoretical and less vocationally oriented. State-supported institutions needed to be concerned that they were training students who could make useful con-

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[34]Ibid., "Suggested Self-Study Report Outline," p. 9.

tributions to the improvement of public service.[35]

Until recently there have been few if any educationally unifying influences in American public administration nor have educators in this field, at least prior to the 1970's, sought greater homogeneity. The prevailing sentiment favored a pluralistic system of education which provided, in the judgment of many persons, more innovative systems of learning. Moreover, there has always been a strong distrust in the American culture of any educational movements or organizations that led to uniformity and centralization. Without question, this prevailing attitude produced some rich and healthy contrasts in educational approaches and programs and enabled educational institutions to serve governmental needs in many satisfying ways. However, the diversity in educational philosophy also produced much confusion and misunderstanding within the American public administration profession, particularly between educators and employing jurisdictions and has in many ways impeded educational progress for a field of knowledge that is indispensable to the effective functioning of public institutions.[36]

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[35]Englebert, Public Administration Education, pp. 6-7.

[36]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

The organizationally autonomous public policy programs are establishing . . . the development of research projects, joint problem-solving exercises.[37]

Value of MPA Degree

Many graduate students enter into the MPA program with the high aspirations that upon the conclusion of the degree they will be able to serve effectively in agencies of government and will be masters of the bureaucratic process. However such expectations are, at best, daydreams, for the MPA degree is not a degree in accounting, it is not a degree in budgeting, and it is even not a degree on how to find your way through the Washington bureaucracy from a GS-9 to a GS-10. The degree program is first an intellectual experience and provides a theoretical as well as operational understanding of the processes and procedures of governing. It is not a degree on how to do it for that is perhaps best learned by those officials who serve in governmental roles who have been doing for years. It is a degree which is intended to bring the student to a level of conceptualization and provide for him the technological

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[37]Ernest A. Engelbert, "University Education for Public Policy Analysis," Public Administration Review 37 (May/June 1977):233.

and analytic foundations for a successful career in governmental and/or public service.[38]

A sample of MPA degree holders believe that the acquisition of the degree is of significant benefit to them in their professional careers in terms of competence gained, and compares favorably with other graduate degrees held by their colleagues. And their supervisors support these findings. The primary advantage of MPA training, as cited by both degree holders and their supervisors, is the greater awareness of the political nature and bureaucratic complexity of public administration possessed by the MPA degree holders. An inquiry into curricular relevancy of the most commonly offered courses in MPA programs confirmed that conclusion.[39]

Degree holders who reported that the MPA had served them better than had their colleagues' master's degrees served them generally indicated that MPA training helps to instill (1) a capacity to understand and cope with the complex political and bureaucratic environment in which the public administrators must operate,

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[38]Medeiros, "Public Administration Study," p. 256.

[39]George Grode and Marc Holzer, "The Perceived Utility of MPA Degrees," Public Administration Review 35 (July/August 1975):411.

with (2) a flexible, reality-oriented attitude, which (3) through planning and communication can be used to make policy decisions, and (4) the administrative skills to carry decisions out.[40]

Administrators in practical positions tend to regard research skills as relatively irrelevant to problem solving. . . Further research might clarify whether that tendency is a defensive bias born of the relatively obsolescent training (i.e., few or no research courses) . . . or an indication that academics overrate research-related courses as prerequisites to municipal administration.[41]

Analysis

Overall, there is a need to produce public administrators with both a generalist and a specialist type of background. He should have a generalist philosophy which satisfies intellectual curiosity and appreciates administrative concepts. He should also have a specialist background which involves a knowledge of the institutional organizational patterns and the ability to approach organizational problems with certain dis-

[40] Ibid., p. 407

[41] Ibid., p. 409

cipline areas and technical tools.

I believe that public affairs/administration education should not be part of a political science department. The reason is that this would stifle program multidisciplinarity. Both public affairs/administration and political science should have their own distinct program needs.

The 1973 NAPA Report, Meeting the Needs of Tomorrow's Public Service: Guidelines for Professional Education in Public Administration, was very interesting and enlightening. It emphasized that too much public administration education in graduate schools neglected the complex operational environment such as the value systems and human relationships. It gives a broad and general view of public administration education and training. The Report does give a reasonable representation of professional education for public administration at the graduate level in the United States.

Setting the guidelines and standards for the MPA degree was definitely a step in the right direction. Although it may not be a perfect diagnostic instrument to everyone in public administration, it could be subject to modification due to changing conditions in the profession. In any case, the MPA matrix set forth by

the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration is very helpful and useful to the students, educational institutions, public managers, and public service employers and jurisdictions.

Without a doubt graduate MPA degree programs should consider placing greater emphasis on research skills courses.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research design in four parts: (1) the description of the study questionnaire; (2) the determination of the sample population; (3) the procedures used in administering the questionnaire; and (4) the number of responses.

Questionnaire

It was decided that the questionnaire would be "as short as possible but long enough to secure the information needed. A long questionnaire is often rejected by a respondent simply because it requires too much time to read and answer"[1] The questionnaire would consist of thirteen questions which asked (1) where the graduate student took most of his courses; (2) what research courses he took; (3) his opinions on research training; (4) his job or position title; and (5) his comments on research training.

Sample

The sample population included thirty-eight graduate students who received an MPA degree from the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs, in August 1977. The MPA graduates had completed the political Science 5990 Research

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[1] Tyrus Hillway, "Research Design," Handbook of Educational Research (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 33.

Problems course as a requirement for graduation. The list of MPA graduates was furnished by the Executive Director, Advanced Programs.

Administration of Questionnaire

On March 16, 1978, thirty-eight questionnaires were initially mailed to the sample population. Included with the questionnaire were a cover letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire had to be easily comprehended and structured to minimize the effect of prejudices . . . Because narrative responses are difficult and costly to interpret and tabulate, open-ended questions were used only when more objective multiple-choice questions were too restrictive.[2]

Responses

Thirty or 79 percent of the thirty-eight questionnaires initially sent out were returned. Three of the returned questionnaires were not deliverable as addressed due to no forwarding address.

A second questionnaire, follow-up letter, and a second stamped, self-addressed envelope were mailed to the eight remaining nonrespondents on April 8, 1978, or twenty-

[2]Herbert R. McLure, "Is a Question the Best Answer?" The GAO Review (Winter 1975):51.

three days after the first mailing. "A follow-up letter should be sent out approximately three to six weeks after mailing the original questionnaire."[3] An additional five or 63 percent of the eight follow-up questionnaires were finally returned, as of May 4, 1978.

Overall, thirty-two or 84 percent of the thirty-eight questionnaires were usable returns. As shown in Table 1, thirty-five or 92 percent of the thirty-eight respondents had replied to the initial and follow-up mailing, of which three or 8 percent were excluded due to no forwarding address.

TABLE 1
REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRES

	Initial Mailing		Follow-up Mailing		Total Mailing	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Replies Escluded	3	8	0	0	3	8
Replies Included	27	71	5	63	32	84
Did Not Reply	8	21	3	37	3	8
Total	38	100	8	100	38	100

Answers to the questionnaires were manually tabulated. Statistical data were presented in their simplest form, such as numerical figures and percentages.

Since each respondent was assured strict confidentiality, the returned questionnaires will not be made available for general review.

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[3]Hillway, Educational Research, p. 35.

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter provides the findings or results of the study.

Practical Application

The MPA graduates that responded took most of their courses at the five major sites (59 percent), as shown in Table 2. Other sites mentioned were: Little Rock AFB, Arkansas (2); Minot AFB, North Dakota (2); Misawa AB, Japan (2); Yokota AB, Japan (2); West Berlin, Germany (2); Canal Zone, Panama (2); and Lackland AFB, Texas (1).

TABLE 2
SITE OF MOST MPA COURSES

Sites	No.	%
Norman, Oklahoma	5	16
Fort Sill, Oklahoma	4	12.5
Washington, D.C.	3	9
Sheppard AFB, Texas	3	9
Offutt AFB, Nebraska	4	12.5
Other	13	41
Total	32	100

In Table 3, 47 percent of the research courses taken were Measurement & Analysis for Public Administrators and Methods in Political Science. Other courses taken were: PS 6173 Decision Theory (2); PS 6973 Market Research (2); and HR 6843 Health Attitudes (1).

TABLE 3
RESEARCH COURSES TAKEN

Courses	No.	%
PS 5173 Measurement & Analysis for Public Administrators	9	25
PS5953 Methods in Political Science	8	22
PS 6413 Seminar-Research Design	0	0
ECON 3223 Intermediate Business Statistics	1	3
None	5	14
Other	5	14
No Response	8	22
Total	36*	100

*Four respondents gave two answers.

At least 39 percent of the respondents felt that the Research Problems course was the most valuable for providing training and understanding of research techniques. Other considerations were (1) taking a course in Probability and Statistics, and (2) taking both research theory and research problems for a 5-8 hours package deal. Data are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
MOST VALUABLE RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Techniques	No.	%
Plan and Conduct a Research Study (Research Problems course)	13	40
Serve as a Research Assistant	9	27
Take a Course(s) in Research Theory	3	9
Take a Research Seminar Course	5	15
Other	2	6
No Response	1	3
Total	33*	100

*One respondent gave two answers.

As shown in Table 5, most of the respondents (88 percent) felt that the Research Problems course was a desirable

means of acquiring research skills even if other research courses were taken.

TABLE 5
RESEARCH PROBLEMS WITH OTHER RESEARCH COURSES

Desirable Means	No.	%
Yes	28	88
No	3	9
No Response	1	3
Total	32	100

Table 6 showed that most of the respondents (81 percent) felt that the Research Problems Course was a desirable means of acquiring research skills even if other research courses were not taken.

TABLE 6
RESEARCH PROBLEMS WITHOUT OTHER RESEARCH COURSES

Desirable Means	No.	%
Yes	26	81
No	6	19
Total	32	100

Half of the respondents (50 percent) preferred an alternative to the Research Problems Course. Other alternatives were: a thesis; take more courses, not research related; additional course or two in subject areas that would have more direct applications; and because of the isolation overseas, any research is a farce. Data are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7
ALTERNATIVE TO RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Alternatives	No.	%
Serve as a Research Assistant	10	31
Take a Course(s) in Research Theory	0	0
Take a Research Seminar Course	2	6
No Alternative & Maintain Research Problems	16	50
Other	4	13
Total	32	100

In Table 8, most of the respondents (88 percent) felt that research training should be included at the MPA level. One respondent gave a tentative yes only if the student has not had background training at the undergraduate level.

TABLE 8
RESEARCH TRAINING AT MPA LEVEL

Research Training	No.	%
Yes	28	88
No	3	9
Tentative Yes	1	3
Total	32	100

As shown in Table 9, most of the respondents (69 percent) felt that the Research Problems Course should be a requirement for the MPA degree.

TABLE 9
RESEARCH PROBLEMS AS MPA REQUIREMENT

MPA Requirement	No.	%
Yes	22	69
No	9	28
No Response	1	3
Total	32	100

Most of the respondents (76 percent) felt that three and four graduate semester hours should be given for the Research Problems Course. Other hours mentioned were: no hours; two hours; 3-5 hours; 3-6 hours; and six hours. Data are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10
GRADUATE SEMESTER HOURS FOR RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Hours	No.	%
3	12	36
4	13	40
5	3	9
Other	5	15
Total	33*	100

*One respondent gave two answers.

Table 11 showed that most of the respondents (69 percent) felt a research program of greater magnitude than the Research Problems Course should not be required for the MPA degree. One respondent gave a tentative yes although it was probably not practical in the overseas program.

TABLE 11
MORE RESEARCH REQUIRED FOR MPA DEGREE

More Research	No.	%
Yes	9	28
No	22	69
Tentative Yes	1	3
Total	32	100

In Table 12, the preferred programs for more research were the master's thesis and two research projects. Other programs were: an expanded Research Problems Course of six hours, and one research course plus one required project.

TABLE 12
PREFERRED PROGRAMS FOR MORE RESEARCH

Programs	No.	%
Master's Thesis	4	40
Two Research Projects	4	40
Master's Thesis and One Research Project	0	0
Other	2	20
Total	10	100

There were twenty-six comments (81 percent) from the thirty-two respondents. Data are shown in Table 13. Examples of the comments were:

(1) The knowledge that I obtained from PS 5990 has substantially helped me in my job.

(2) Doing research is the best learning tool.

(3) The training is good theory.

(4) More faculty coordination and direction would be beneficial.

(5) One course in statistics should be offered as a research tool.

(6) I have always favored an individual oriented problem.

(7) There is merit in research training, but the requirement for a research paper should be eliminated.

(8) I feel a greater sense of accomplishment from the program because of the requirement for a research paper.

(9) I really didn't have a good grasp of the techniques that one could use in researching a problem.

(10) Research problems or courses should be optional.

(11) Advisors must continue to demand quality work from their students.

(12) There should be some requirement, yet look back on my own experience as a largely negative learning situation.

(13) Two research projects would be better to improve research skills.

(14) I thoroughly enjoy doing the research, although the research theme can be overdone.

(15) Conducting a research project is not very productive, but an additional course or two in subject areas with more direct application would be preferred.

(16) More training would help after a person gets a job.

(17) The research problem course is needed to maintain full accreditation.

(18) The guidelines established by the counsellor for the paper should be the best advice a candidate could get.

(19) The ability to do research is an important element in the educational process.

(20) Anyone awarded a masters degree in any subject should be proficient in academic research methods.

(21) A research problem is essential and necessary, but research could be better fulfilled by two research problems.

(22) I would have benefitted just as much from a couple of extra courses.

(23) It was one of the most valuable things I did, and it forces the student to become aware of the vast amounts of information available.

(24) Guidance for the prospectus preparation was excellent, but no guidance was given for determining the number of credit hours to take for the research problems course.

(25) The research problems course is the best since it requires familiarity with certain fundamentals of any research project, and allows the needed flexibility.

(26) After spending a considerable amount of time, effort, and work, you end up with a research paper which qualifies for a thesis.

TABLE 13
COMMENTS ON MPA RESEARCH TRAINING

Comments	No.	%
Yes	26	81
No	6	19
Total	32	100

Description

Thirty-one or 97 percent of the respondents gave their current job or position title. Data are shown in Table 14. Examples of the various titles were:

(1) Analytic Systems Manager

(2) Supervisor - Production Control

(3) Field Representative for the O.U. Program

(4) Contract Specialist

(5) Public Health Investigator

(6) Environmental Science Officer

(7) Air Force Pilot

(8) Provost Marshal - Chief of Police

(9) Commanding Officer, Regional Personnel Center

(10) Air Force Procurement Officer

(11) Life Insurance Agent

(12) Field Artillery, Research Analyst

(13) Chief, Air Traffic Control Operations

(14) Air Force Logistics Management Specialist Supervisor

(15) C-5 Squadron Pilot

(16) Aircraft Maintenance Staff Officer

(17) Director, Housing and Services

(18) Staff Manager

(19) Administrator, Purchasing and Property for Social Services

(20) Electronic Engineer

(21) Chief of Career Progression Personnel Division

(22) Air Force Flight Commander

(23) Instructor Supervisor

(24) Air Force Special Investigator

(25) Air Force Project Engineer

(26) Chief, Personnel Plans Division

(27) Assistant Administrator, Army Research Institute

(28) Air Force Chief of Administration

(29) Special Investigator and Special Prosecutor for Nursing Homes

(30) On-Board Systems Manager

(31) Air Force Emergency Actions Officer

TABLE 14
JOB/POSITION TITLE

Title	No.	%
Yes	31	97
No	1	3
Total	32	100

V . SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter gives the analysis of data summary, conclusions drawn as a result of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Summary

Analysis of the study data revealed twelve findings:

(1) The respondents took most of their MPA courses at twelve different sites.

(2) Almost half of the respondents (47 percent) had taken Measurement and Analysis for Public Administrators and Methods in Political Science.

(3) Two-thirds of the respondents (66) percent felt that the Research Problems Course and the Research Assistantship were the most valuable for training and understanding of research techniques.

(4) Most of the respondents (88 and 81 percent) felt that the Research Problems Course was desirable for acquiring research skills even if other research courses were taken, and were not taken, respectively.

(5) Fifty percent of the respondents preferred an alternative to the Research Problems Course.

(6) Seven-eights of the respondents (88 percent) wanted research training included at the MPA level.

(7) Most of the respondents (69 percent) wanted the Research Problems Course required for the MPA degree.

(8) Three-fourths of the respondents (76 percent) felt that three or four graduate semester hours credit should be given for the Research Problems Course.

(9) Most of the respondents (69 percent) did not want a research program of greater magnitude than the Research Problems Course required for the MPA degree.

(10) The preferred programs for more research (80 percent) were the master's thesis and two research projects.

(11) More than four-fifths of the respondents (81 percent) provided comments on research training at the MPA level.

(12) All but one (97 percent) of the respondents gave their current job or position title.

Conclusions

Seven conclusions were drawn as a result of this study:

(1) Research training is needed and should be included at the MPA level.

(2) The Research Problems Course was very effective and desirable in helping graduate students acquire the needed research techniques.

(3) The Research Problems Course was the single most valuable course for training and understanding of research techniques.

(4) Almost two-thirds of the MPA graduates (64 percent) took other research-oriented courses in addition to the Research Problems Course.

(5) A master's thesis or two research projects were not desirable programs required for the MPA degree.

(6) The Research Problems Course should still be required and should still carry three or four graduate semester hours credit.

(7) The ideal preparation for research training would be to take a research-oriented course(s) in addition to the Research Problems Course.

Recommendations

Further research needs are recommended. Two areas for future research are as follows:

(1) It is suggested that the present study be replicated by using another population sample, such as other MPA graduating classes. A comparison between the results of both studies would show the similarities and differences in the opinions of both samples; and

(2) Further research should continually be made to improve the research training at the University of Oklahoma, Advanced Programs.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Please check ( ) the appropriate answer to the following questions. If any question brings a different answer than those given, please write in that answer.

1. At what site did you take most of your MPA courses?

_____Norman, Oklahoma
_____Fort Sill, Oklahoma
_____Washington, D. C.
____Sheppard AFB, Texas
____Offutt AFB, Nebraska
____Other, specify_____

2. If you took any of the following research-related courses, indicate which one(s).

_____PS5173 Measurement & Analysis for Public Administrators
_____PS5953 Methods in Political Science
_____PS6413 Seminar-Research Design
_____ECON3223 Intermediate Business Statistics
_____Other, specify _____

3. Which of the following do you feel would be the most valuable for providing training and understanding of research techniques for MPA students?

_____Plan and conduct a research study (Research Problems)
_____Serve as a research assistant
_____Take a course(s) in research theory
_____Take a research seminar course
_____Other, specify _____

4. Do you feel the Research Problems course is a desirable means of acquiring research skills even if research-oriented courses are taken?

_____Yes
_____No

5. Do you feel the Research Problems course is a desirable means of acquiring research skills in the event research-oriented courses are <u>not</u> taken?

_____Yes
_____No

6. Would you have preferred as an alternative to the Research Problems course, any of the programs listed below?

_____Serve as a research assistant
_____Take a course(s) in research theory
_____Take a research seminar course
_____Prefer no alternative and maintain the Research Problems course
_____Other, specify _____

7. Do you feel that research training should be included in a graduate program at the MPA level?

_____Yes
_____No

8. Do you feel that the Research Problems course should be a requirement for the MPA degree?

_____Yes
_____No

9. How many semester hours credit do you feel should be given for the Research Problems course?

_____3
_____4
_____5
_____Other, specify _____

10. Do you feel that a research-oriented program of greater magnitude than the Research Problems course should be required for the MPA degree?

_____Yes
_____No

11. If the answer to question 10 is yes, check the preferred program.

_____Master's Thesis
_____2 Research Projects
_____Master's Thesis and 1 Research Project
_____Other, specify _____

12. What is the title of your current job or position?

13. Any comments in respect to research training at the MPA level would be greatly appreciated. Your comments are important.

Name _____

March 16, 1978

Dear MPA Graduate:

For my PS5990 Research Problems course, I am conducting a survey to obtain your feelings on the need for research training at the MPA level. Your response is very important, and shall be of assistance to those who are planning future requirements for the MPA degree at the University of Oklahoma.

Please answer the questionnaire to the best of your ability. All responses shall be held in strict confidence. Only aggregate totals shall be used. Enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience.

Thanking you in advance for your help and prompt reply, we remain

Sincerely yours,

Ivan Trotsky
MPA Candidate
Oklahoma University

Dr. Jeffrey Rinehart
Associate Professor
Dept. of Government
and Public Service

April 8, 1978

Dear MPA Graduate:

Recently I sent a number of questionnaires to MPA Graduates at the University of Oklahoma who, like yourself, had completed the PS5990 Research Problems course. As of this date, there are some questionnaires which have not been returned.

Your help is urgently needed. Will you please respond? In order to complete the research study, it is essential to get as near a 100% response as possible.

I have enclosed for your convenience another questionnaire and self-addressed, stamped envelope in the event the originals were misplaced. If on the other hand, your response had already been mailed, please accept our deepest thanks.

Sincerely yours,

Ivan Trotsky
MPA Candidate
Oklahoma University

Dr. Jeffrey Rinehart
Associate Professor
Dept. of Government
and Public Service

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